

Museological Action's Main Fields

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Museology has emerged and has been organised as a field of knowledge, precisely to frame the technical, theoretical and methodological aspects, regarding the constitution, implementation and evaluation of the processes that societies establish for the selection, treatment and extroversion of the memory indicators, transforming them into patrimonial references and projecting them into the constitutive fields of cultural heritage.

It is therefore, one of the areas of knowledge that deals with the framing of heritage and their professionals are agents of memory education.

The constitution of the parameters that define and delimit the museological action field has been outlined in the course of the centuries, if we consider the technical efforts related to the identification and organisation of collections, in addition to the curatorial treatment of specimens from nature, of objects, of the intangible heritage registers. The same length of elaboration is true if we evaluate the communication initiatives and of education of the senses.

It is an area with an interest in bringing the interpreted objects closer to the interpreting gazes, as well as redeeming from memory indicators the different meanings and significances. Or, better stated, it is an area concerned with the preservation of the lucidity of the perceptive gazes – which appropriate cultural references, collections, constituting museological institutions – but always with the intention

of rendering the reversibility of those gazes possible, of allowing new patrimonial arrangements and new cultural appropriations.

Museology, in its interdisciplinary dynamics, has collaborated with the museums in the refinement of their representation formats and in their establishment as places not only of cultural contestation and negotiation, but also as shelter and learning spaces.

Despite some different opinions there is a growing awareness, even in Brazil, that museological institutions have a relevant role to play in contemporary society and that, for the fulfilment of its basic functions, they need theoretical support and methodological procedures adequate to the challenges imposed on them.

It is possible to evaluate that Museology relies on a trajectory of experimentations and analyses that situates it amidst the applied disciplines, committed above all to the building of memory systems and their study. It is, therefore, an area of knowledge that establishes cognitive and affective links between heritage's references and contemporary society's different segments.

The museological action fields, within a panoramic perspective that illustrates and indicates the main challenges for the 21st Century, can be unveiled using different criteria and multiple approaches.

For the interest of this seminar, I have opted to present a reflection, concentrating on three interlinked fields:

ESSENTIAL FIELD

INTERLOCUTION FIELD

PROJECTION FIELD

From this point of view, we propose that this discipline's **essential concern** is geared towards two big problems. On the one

hand, **in an interlocution field**, there emerges the need to identify and understand humanity's individual and/or collective behaviour in the course of time, in the face of our heritage; and, on the other hand, **in a projection field**, emerge the processes that, from this relation, allow heritage to be transformed into inheritance and that, in its turn, contributes to the construction of identities.

Thus we consider some delimitating and defining parameters of this essential field, always sustained by the perspective of knowledge production and by the vocation for preservation. We understand that all museological operations – directly or indirectly – should consolidate research bases, aiming the production of new knowledge, the organisation of technical studies and valorisation of popular knowledges. We propose, as this reflection's emphasis, that the actions of this essential field be guided towards vocation for preservation paths.

We consider that **RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION** constitute the defining and elementary parameters.

While the delimiting parameters of the museological action's essential field were consolidated from a dynamics of the **SAFEGUARD and COMMUNICATION** procedures operative chain – **always supported by the perspective delineated by the actions of PLANNING AND EVALUATION.**

On the one hand, safeguarding actions handle conservation and documentation problems, and, on the other, exhibition and educational-cultural action problems remain intertwined in communication actions.

These are interdependent areas, with deep daily reciprocities. These areas demand an effort from all the professionals involved in the search for common procedures, in the construction of buildings

adequate to the museological functions, in work methodologies compatible with the distinct specialities and in constant opening in order to tread new professional paths.

The success of exhibitions, within the scope of museums, depends on variables resulting, for instance, from the mentalities that generate museological processes, from the potentialities of collections' safeguarding and communication, from the institutions' administrative profiles, from the search for solutions to conceptual and technical problems and, specially, from the knowledge about the expectations of different publics.

One treads paths daily, with the aim of building work processes and of establishing **the relations between society and its musealised heritage.**

These paths are permeated with tensions. Some tensions accumulated in the course of time, due to interrupted processes' routes, other imposed by a demand above the given technical delimitations. There are still those that emerge by the negligence that afflicts our institutions. But there are also the tensions between the generations of professionals, between the updating of the distinct technical responsibilities within the scope of Museography, between the action of the museum and the resolution of socio-cultural problems of the public, among many others.

Tensions are important, for they stimulate us.

They lead us to reflect on the **INTERLOCUTION FIELD**, permeated by problems related to the exercise of interdisciplinarity in the consolidation of museological projects; related to the valuing of a process approach applied to museum acquisition regarding the deadlocks inherent to accessibility – in form and content – of the museological institutions, and, above all, related to the definitions and

propositions about the role that the museums can play in promoting socio-cultural inclusion.

Regarding the **PROJECTION FIELD** there emerge an increasing number of strategies to give visibility to the institutions and also new challenges for the sustainability of this complex safekeeping and heritage communication universe. The social role to be played by the museum acquisition processes and how they can become a development landmark is also much discussed.

To reflect about museums and their distinct social insertions means, further, to raise issues that lie forgotten in the immense universe of the values that are excluded in the share of meanings and in the efficacy of cultural amnesia. In these moments we cannot avoid to consider that, for a long time, museums acted from pillaging, expropriations and have stopped the raising of contradictions.

If in the genesis of the museums' constitution, at the end of the 18th Century, one can identify the Enlightenment ideal of the public property of cultural heritage, we can also state that the exacerbation of the actions of preservation has reinvigorated the meaning of individual property over cultural property. The idea of possession, inherited from collectionism, finds, still today, fertile ground for its exercise, often confusing the public and private spheres.

The museums, in the last few decades, have played a relevant and specific role in the *democratisation of culture*, breaking the barriers of its traditional spaces, seeking new publics and creating exhibitions that incorporate mixed languages. These institutions experiment new management models, coming closer to network programmes and systems, without, however, losing sight of its essential action field.

In this tireless search for the consolidation of its fields of action, **MUSEOLOGY** has allowed for a singular contribution

regarding individuals' and societies' valorisation and self-esteem, as well as having collaborated with the refinement of the notion of belonging. This singular contribution can range from the small and community museums up to the big and complex institutions, including the specialised museums, the museological networks, in short, including all kinds of institutions - and in all places, for, in fact, Museology features a globalised action.

Therefore, the Museums' contemporary challenges and, specially, the exhibitions – by means of a museological gaze – can be summarised in four vectors:

- **to refine the work methodologies of safeguard and communication**
(BET ON THE EVERYDAY EXERCISE)
- **to implement systematic planning and evaluation procedures**
(REPORT TO SOCIETY)
- **to unfold the accessibility possibilities towards the museum acquisition process.**
(WIDEN SPACES AND UNFOLD CONTENTS)
- **to specialise the professional gazes mobilising academic education**
(BELIEVE IN NEW GENERATIONS)

In short and to close, the challenges are enormous, but the vectors are well decoded and... recalling Mario de Andrade, who wrote in 1938:

“what interests us in museums is not their technical transformation, but their moral transformation.”